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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 002293

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SUBJECT: ANC SHOWS ALLIANCE WHO IS BOSS

REF: PRETORIA 2030

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Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The African National Congress (ANC) on November 8 reaffirmed the party's support for Minister in the Presidency for National Planning Trevor Manuel's controversial plan for a National Planning Commission, making it clear to ruling tripartite alliance members in the trade unions and communist party that it has final say on policy decisions. Manuel in September released his office's "National Strategic Planning" paper (see reftel), which calls for a planning commission composed of respected intellectuals and experts outside of government who would produce policy strategies and programs of action for implementing those strategies. Manuel's "National Strategic Planning" paper (also known as the "Green Paper") angered the Congress for South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), who accused the former Finance Minister of seeking to become the "de facto Prime Minister" and of sidelining Minister of Economic Development Ebrahim Patel. The decision by the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) to endorse the idea of a National Planning Commission could raise tensions between the ANC, COSATU, and the SACP ahead of the alliance summit on November 15. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The ANC's NEC, during its final meeting of the year on November 7-8, confirmed that there should be a National Planning Commission in the government to coordinate and align the work of various government departments. In a brief statement, the body also asserted that the Commission should be chaired by Manuel, include a wide range of technocrats, and vet its decisions strictly through Cabinet. The NEC framed its endorsement of the commission by stating that it had received a government assessment of energy challenges in electricity. (Note: Framing the discussion in this way also is an explicit endorsement of Manuel's work because the former Finance Minister himself said publicly that the reason the ANC decided to create a position in the Presidency for National Planning was because the party wants to avoid the electricity shortages South Africa experienced in 2007. End Note.) The NEC statement on the creation of the commission also came from ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe, arguably the most powerful ruling party member after President Jacob Zuma, and a key broker between the various competing alliance

factions. (Note: Mantashe in October told COSATU and SACP to "back off" and give the ANC space to implement its agenda. End Note.)

¶3. (C) The ANC announced several other significant decisions in addition to endorsing the National Planning Commission. First, the party acknowledged that local service delivery needs improvement in the face of widespread, and ongoing, protests. The ANC said the party "cites systemic legislative as well as political factors, to name a few, that contribute to the erosion of confidence of the majority of our people in our municipalities as the primary delivery machine." The party added, "The NEC agreed that a turnaround strategy is urgently needed to restore the confidence of our people in our municipalities." Second, the ANC acknowledged a report on the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The Qon the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The party stated, "If we don't act now to prevent further infections and do extraordinary work for South Africans to know their status, the death rate will soon be higher than the birth rate. The ANC will intensify its campaign around the epidemic ... and fully endorse the ten-point plan around health." Third, the party announced it would launch a party veterans league in December 2009.

¶4. (C) Comment: The ANC's statements on service delivery problems, health, and veterans affairs show the party moving away from some of the unpopular stances taken under former President Thabo Mbeki. However, the ANC's endorsement of Manuel's National Planning Commission shows the party has no intention of yielding the final say on certain issues, despite public criticism from their alliance partners, which was the same way business was done under Mbeki. The ANC appears in firm control of its vision and how it plans to implement it. While the party's decision to confirm Manuel's

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vision could cause rancor at the alliance summit on November 13-15, the timing of its endorsement suggests the ANC is confident of overcoming any objections. End Comment.  
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